

Horticulture Northwest

Journal of the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society



Myrica californica (see page 11)
Mareen S. Kruckeberg

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Horticulture Northwest

Volume 4 Number 1 Spring 1977

Sallie D. Allen, Editor

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Introducing:

Horticulture Northwest

Journal of the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society

Spring 1977 marks the beginning of the fourth year we have offered a publication on a regular basis to our members. Our origin was simple: an eight page bimonthly Newsletter early in 1974, intended to bring forth fresh new horticultural information, written by and for Northwest gardeners. We have tried to combine botanical accuracy and sound gardening methods with the enthusiastic literary style and individuality of each of our writers. The original editorial staff was a few volunteers, with no editorial background. We have learned the hard way, constantly asking questions, with experience as our teacher.

We are deeply appreciative of the strong support, assistance and encouragement of our editorial advisors; Brian O. Mulligan, Director Emeritus, University of Washington Arboretum; Joseph A. Witt, Curator of Plant Collections; William H. Hatheway, College of Forest Resources. I also feel a personal indebtedness to Richard A. Howard, Director Emeritus of Arnold Arboretum, who has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of our Newsletter from its inception.

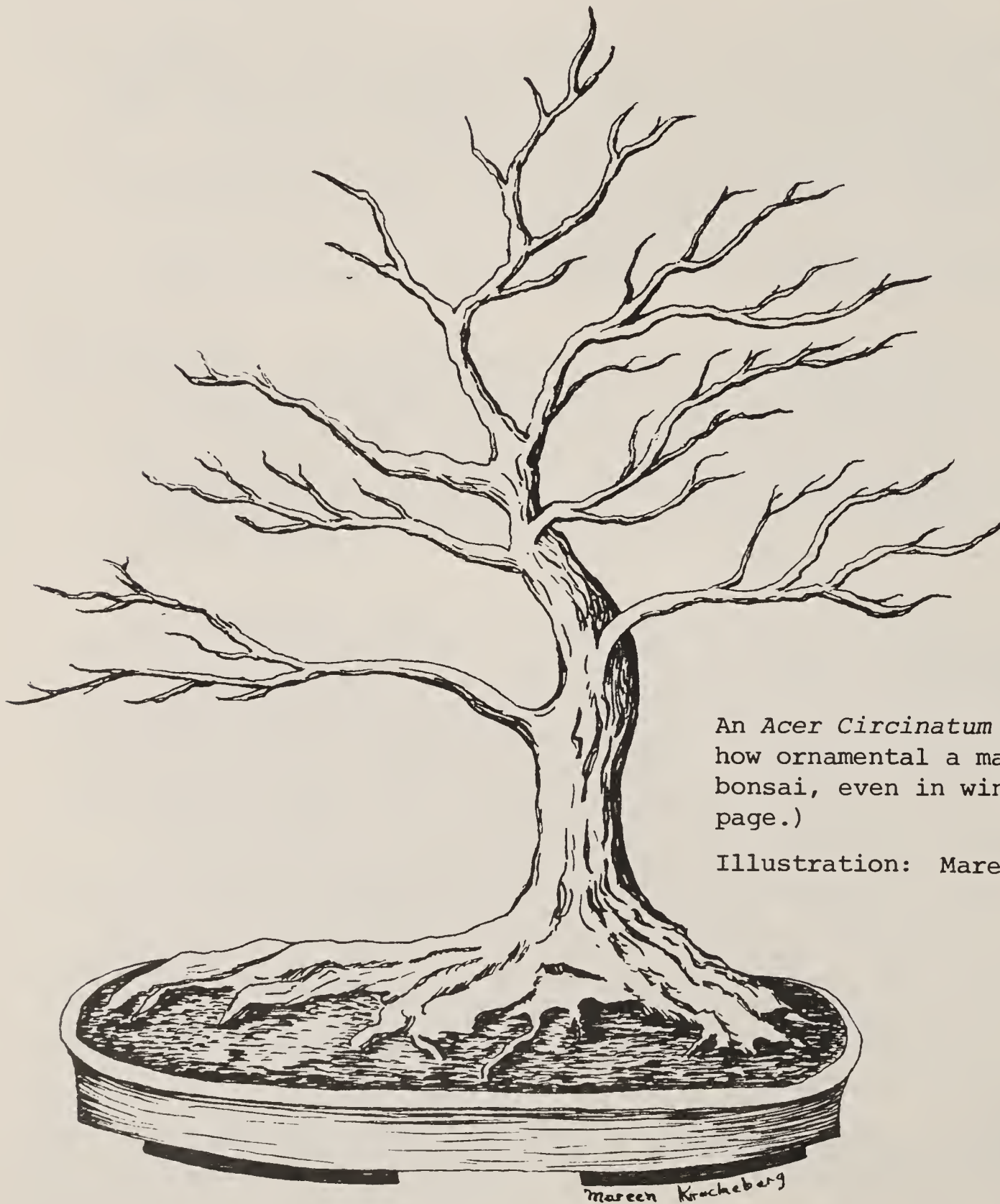
We realize and appreciate the unique qualities in the climate and soil conditions of the Pacific Northwest which afford us the opportunity of growing perhaps the widest range of plant material of any place in the temperate world. We are also blessed with an abundance of superior gardeners and amateur botanists interested in discovering, growing and distributing new and interesting plants from all over the world. There is the virtually untapped potential of exciting North American plant material to explore. Literature on the flora of Alaska, Canada and the United States whets the gardeners appetite. The steadily increasing interest in knowing and growing our Northwest natives makes us acutely aware of the lack of horticultural information on this subject, and nursery sources are almost nonexistent. We will continue to solicit and publish accurate information on growing our Northwest natives, many of which we are propagating for the annual NOHS Fall Plant Sale. Surely this is one of the ways that our organization can contribute to the world of ornamental horticulture. We will also publish new information on old favorites and plants which deserve to be better known.

We are fortunate to have the authoritative five volume work, Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest by C. Leo Hitchcock et al. In questions

of identification and nomenclature of Northwest flora, Hitchcock is our authority.

The introduction of *Horticulture Northwest* marks a new beginning with new features, new services and an expanded editorial staff.. Working with me as associate editors are Ginny McElwain and Allen Dale Terrill, both young, new members of the NOHS with tremendous talent and boundless enthusiasm. It is our hope that with your assistance we will be able to provide an ever increasing amount of useful gardening information.

Sallie D. Allen



An *Acer Circinatum* that illustrates how ornamental a maple can be as a bonsai, even in winter. (See opposite page.)

Illustration: Mareen S. Kruckeberg

A MISCELLANY OF NOTES ON THE GROWING AND PROPAGATION OF MAPLES

Milton Gaschk, Tacoma, Washington

Part II

MAPLES IN BONSAI

Much has been written and many good books have been published on this subject, so to discuss detailed growing techniques in this article would be completely redundant. It appears that there is more interest in the use of evergreen material than in the deciduous for Bonsai. A small conifer or juniper can be quickly shaped and placed in a tray to make at least an acceptable likeness, to the casual eye, of a Bonsai specimen, and the evergreen Bonsai is "in dress" at all times of the year.

Certain features of a maple Bonsai are so outstanding, however, that they should not be overlooked for this form of horticultural expression. The ever changing seasonal pattern in its development provides continuous interest: the first flush to growth with the delicate nuances of sienna and crimson, the various shades of green, the second and succeeding flushes of growth with their attendant colors, and, finally the climax of the fall show in their kimono-colored displays.

Training and pruning are simple and easily accomplished when started at the seedling stage. The methods of training are controversial. At the spring Chelsea show in London this year, two large exhibits of Bonsai subjects were on display. One used the usual wire methods to accomplish the contortions, the other grower strongly opposed to such "unnatural" methods stressed pruning and weighting as a means to obtain this feeling of age and stress.

Trunk size in these miniature trees is an important objective -- to give the suggestion of old age. Growing a young maple in a normal, say, half-gallon sized container, with a high nutritional level soil mixture for several years, with pruning back of the more adventurous growth from time to time, can produce larger trunk calipers faster than for the equivalent period in the Bonsai tray. Seasonal root pruning should also be done during this stage. When a suitable trunk size and shape has been reached, the tree can be placed into its final bonsai container. Relationship between the initial growing container and final container must be within reasonable tolerances. Root volume must be kept within bounds during this period.

Fertilizers and fertilizing techniques vary among growers. The Japanese often stress the need for a slow acting organic form, such as rape seed meal. Cotton seed meal in this country is a good substitute. High levels of soluble nitrogen should be avoided. In dilute form it serves as a useful tonic in early spring. Several writers advocate the use of soda water or charcoal in the mixture as a source of carbon dioxide. I have no experience with this practice.

Leaf pinching (removal) or removing half the leaf is recommended when leaf size is out of proportion with the dwarf specimen. The suggestion is that succeeding leaves will be smaller.

Most maples represented in Bonsai collections in this country are the familiar Japanese *Acer palmatum*. A popular species frequently used in Japan is *Acer buergerianum* (the trident maple), with ivy-like, three lobed leaves. Each new flush of growth provides a series of attractive red tints. My garden specimen, now something in the order of 18 feet, exhibits a most colorful fall display; a combination of seemingly translucent array of purples, plums, reds and crimsons. Regretfully, the seed has so far proved to be non-viable.

An uncommon group offering unusual bark patterns that make distinctive Bonsai subjects are the marbled or snake barks. *Acer capillipes* with fine linear red markings, *A. crataegifolium*, *A. davidii*, *A. grosseri* and var. *hirsutum*, *A. pensylvanicum* and *A. rufrum*, all with white striations on their barks, are prime examples.

A method practiced by Japanese nurserymen to quickly achieve old age in Bonsai complete with large caliper trunk, frequently distorted, is to gradually root prune and "work down" (carefully pruning back) over three or four years an established smallish older tree or shrub and finally transfer it to a bonsai tray. Airlayering of selected branches on old trees with characteristic wind distorted shapes is also practiced.

TRAINING AND PRUNING

Though grown outdoors, many species of maples can be trained to show interesting patterns, similar to that followed in Bonsai practice -- but on a larger scale. If started at an early stage, limb twisting can be accomplished through use of heavy wire, bamboo frames or weights, -- use your imagination.

Multiple stem development, if properly trained, will ultimately offer some unusual effects by pruning away lower foliage to accentuate the twisted main stems.

The tendency of some forms, especially of *Acer palmatum*, to develop planed or "wind shaped" surfaces in their leaf patterns should be exploited by eliminating excessive foliage and emphasizing single select branches.

Most dissectums after reaching some age, have the appearance of a neglected sheep dog with their completely overgrown bushy habit. The lower and other selected branches should be removed to expose their naturally attractive twisted inner structure.

(To be continued)

BOTANY FOR GARDENERS

Mareen S. Kruckeberg

LEAF SHAPES



pinnately compound
Rhus glabra
Sumac



palmate
Acer circinatum
Vine Maple



palmately compound
Lupinus sp.
Lupine



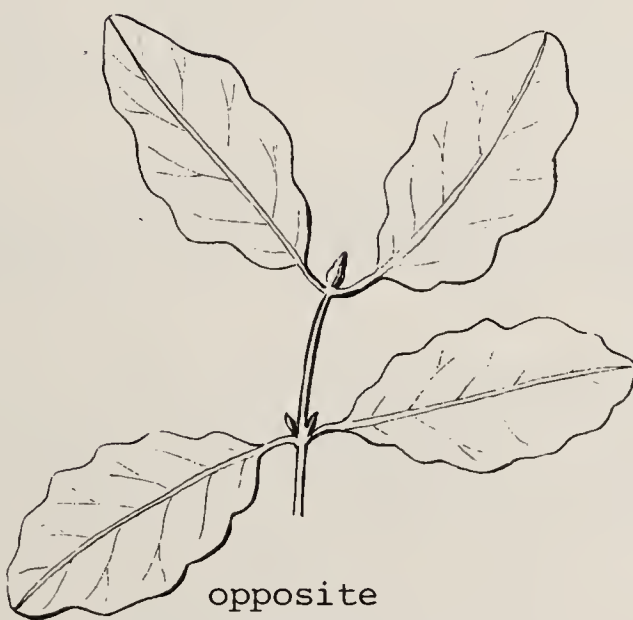
bipinnate



trifoliolate
Trifolium sp.
Clover



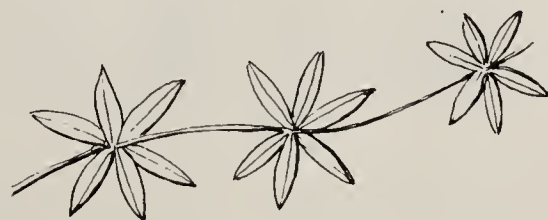
alternate
Rhamnus purshiana
Cascara



opposite
Garrya elliptica
Silk Tassel Tree



whorled
Cornus canadensis
Bunchberry



whorled
Galium trifidum
Bedstraw

MOUNTAIN LAUREL - CINDERELLA OF THE FOREST

Richard A. Jaynes

Geneticist, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment
Station, New Haven

Sometimes our closest friends surprise us with revelations about themselves. The information may be volunteered or it may be elicited with gentle persuasion. Perhaps we have an analogous situation with mountain laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*. It is a longtime friend of the gardener, a plant native to the acid soils of the eastern United States, and held in high enough esteem to be the state flower of Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Yet, we are just learning some of the secrets of this Cinderella of the forest.

Surprising to most is the extensive variation within the species. Some of the unusual types, such as plants with banded flowers or miniature habit, have been known for a century. New variants have recently been discovered and others, such as those with deep flower color, have resulted from recurrent selection in the garden and nursery. Breeding promises to further extend the range and assortment of attractive mountain laurel cultivars.

There are seven species of *Kalmia*, all North American. In addition to mountain laurel they include *Kalmia angustifolia*, sheep laurel; *K. cuneata*, white wicky; *K. hirsuta*, sandhill laurel; *K. microphylla*, western laurel; *K. polifolia*, eastern bog laurel; and *K. ericoides*, Cuban laurel. Variants with special ornamental value have been selected from all of these species, but domestication of types most suitable for the garden has proceeded farthest with mountain laurel for at least two reasons: the wild plant adapts readily to the garden and variation within the species allows for the selection of a range of garden types.

Some 25 distinct kinds of mountain laurel are known, and considering possible recombinations, there could literally be hundreds of unique sorts developed. Most of the variants are relatively unknown and unavailable commercially.¹ Unusual botanical forms of horticultural value include:

WILLOW-LEAFED MOUNTAIN LAUREL, FORM *angustata*. As the name implies the leaves are very narrow. Older plants have a graceful flowing form resulting from the leaf form and their arching habit. A large plant exists at the Henry Foundation, Gladwyne, PA.

¹ A list of commercial sources of *Kalmia* is available from the Conn. Agr. Exp. Station, Genetics Dept., Box 1106, New Haven, CT 06504. Vegetative propagation of named cultivars is still limited. Red-budded, deep pinks, and banded are listed by a few nurseries. Most of the other types referred to are not yet commercially available.



Mountain Laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*

Sandhill laurel, *Kalmia hirsuta*



MINIATURE MOUNTAIN LAUREL, FORM *myrtifolia*. This is a charming plant of the mountain laurel type but with reduced stature, miniaturized throughout. It is very rare in the wild. Miniature habit is recessively inherited compared to normal habit. When two miniature plants are crossed all the offspring are miniature; however, variation occurs among such seedlings for leaf shape, flower color and other characters, but they are recognizable as the form *myrtifolia*.

BANDED MOUNTAIN LAUREL, FORM *fuscata*. The flowers are distinguished by a darkly pigmented, brownish purple or cinnamon colored band on the inside of the corolla. Usually the band is about 4 mm in width, however, it may be narrower and interrupted, or so broad as to virtually color the entire inside of the corolla. Expression of banded is apparently under the control of a single dominant gene. Approximately 50% of the seedlings from a banded plant crossed with a normal have banded flowers.

FEATHER PETAL MOUNTAIN LAUREL, FORM *polypetala*. This form is noted for the cut corolla which results in five strap-shaped petals. Normally it is not an attractive ornamental because the petals are too narrow and rolled. A plant with firm, broad petals would be a valuable find. A recently found variant, named 'Shooting Star' is notable because the corolla is partially cut and the lobes tend to reflex like a *Dodecatheon*. An added feature of 'Shooting Star' is that it flowers about two weeks later than normal for the species.

Intensely colored forms have resulted from several generations of selections in the garden and nursery. The late C. O. Dexter of rhododendron fame reportedly selected deep pink forms from the wild, grew seedlings from them, and again selected those with deepest flower color. This process was repeated several

times and continued by the Mezitts of Weston Nursery, Hopkinton, Massachusetts. Each generation of selection resulted in more plants having a richer flower color. Approximately five generations of selection resulted in plants with an iridescent, red-bud color and other plants with a rich, deep pink flowers, both in bud and when open. Ten years ago a solid, red-flowered mountain laurel did not seem possible, but each generation of plant selection moves us closer to that goal.

Our role at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station has been to pull together the information and available plant material to learn how some of the ornamental traits are inherited, and to use this information to further extend the color range and the development of attractive, ornamental laurels. Along the way we have become involved in the taxonomy, cytology, seed propagation, vegetative propagation, and other cultural aspects of this plant. *Kalmia* has been a wonderful genus with which to work and one that will continue to respond to further efforts.

One new selection from a second generation cross of banded with red-budded mountain laurel combines the two traits in a plant that is extremely attractive in bud and eye catching when the flowers fully open. Many other attractive, new kinds of ornamental mountain laurel should be developed by recombining known forms. For example, miniature mountain laurel can be reproduced true from seed. By appropriate crosses a whole series of miniatures incorporating red bud, banded, or pink flowers, as well as other foliage and flower traits is possible.

Of course we still have much to learn about the best ways to propagate mountain laurel. Time from seed sowing to flowering is commonly 5 to 8 years. Cuttings are somewhat faster when they can be induced to root and then break dormancy. Selection of clones that will root is important. Commercial production of plants in the future will probably be in containers, using a non-soil medium with high porosity, such as some of the bark mixes.

Mountain laurel remains a species ripe for horticultural exploitation. The sibling *Kalmia* species are also in need of further selection and breeding to develop improved garden selections. There are certainly other genera of plants adapted to North America that are similarly ready for domestication. The botanic gardens and arboreta can and will play a role in their development by maintaining unique collections. There is a danger for horticulturists and their institutions to dabble and collect everything at the risk of not being outstanding in anything. There are decided advantages to the respective institutions, researchers, plant societies, nurserymen, and the public for each garden or arboretum to have definitive collections of one or more genera. Certainly if a good *Kalmia* collection had existed our start up time would have been considerably shortened. I encourage the continuance of special collections, be they *Ilex*, *Kalmia*, *Halesia*, *Viburnum*, *Crataegus* or others. It is through such collections that there will come additional appreciation for specific plants and their ornamental development. The rediscovery of old laurels and the breeding of new ones suggests that other Cinderellas exist in the garden and forest and merely await our attention.

REFERENCES

R.A. JAYNES, *The Laurel Book*, Hafner Press (Div. Macmillan) 1975 (\$10.95) includes the botany, culture, propagation, selection, and breeding of *Kalmia*. Pertinent journal articles include:

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COMING GARDEN EVENTS

- April 2 Camellia Show and Plant Sale
& 3 Sponsored by: Oregon Camellia Society
2nd - 10 AM - 6 PM., 3rd - Noon to 5 PM.
Jantzen Beach Mall, Portland, Oregon
- April 2 Early Rhododendron Show
& 3 Sponsored by: Seattle Chapter, Rhododendron Society
2nd - 2 PM - 6 PM., 3rd - 10 AM - 5 PM.
Flag Plaza, Seattle Center
- April 9 Primrose Show and Plant Sale
& 10 Sponsored by: Washington State Primrose Society
23rd - 1 PM - 9 PM., 24th - Noon - 5 PM.
Peoples National Bank, Redmond, Washington
- April 14 "The Beauty of Primroses in Your Garden" -
Mrs. Herbert Dickson
Sponsored by: N.O.H.S. - Monthly Program Meeting.
11:30 AM View displays and coffee available -
Noon Program
Pacific Science Center, Eames Theater
- April 19 Annual Orthopedic Plant Sale
& 20 Sponsored by: Supporters of the Childrens Orthopedic Hospital
19th - 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM., 20th - 9:30 AM - 1:30 PM.
University Village.
- April 22 "Nevada/California Mountain and Desert Plants"
Margaret Williams, Reno, Nev.
Sponsored by: American Rock Garden Society -
Seattle Chapter
Time and Place to be announced.
- April 28 Annual Spring Garden Tour
Sponsored by: N.O.H.S.
Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden at
Weyerhaeuser
9:30 - bus leaves Arboretum Offices - Fare \$3.25. Reservations required. Call Mrs. Joseph Dunn, 455-2381.
- April 30 African Violet Show and Plant Sale
& May 1 Sponsored by: Seattle African Violet Society
Eames Theater, Pacific Science Center

- April 30 Gesneriad Show
& May 1 Sponsored by: Puget Sound Gesneriad Society
Eames Theater, Pacific Science Center
(Combined with the African Violet Show)
- May 4 Arboretum Foundation Plant Sale
& 5 Sponsored by the Arboretum Foundation
4th - 4 - 8 PM 5th - 10 AM - 4 PM
At the Arboretum.
- May 12 "Iris in Your Garden" - Mr. Fred Crandell
Sponsored by : N.O.H.S.-Monthly Program
Meeting 11:30 AM. View displays, Coffee
available-Noon Program- Eames Theater.
- May 16 "Flowers of the World" - Frances Perry,
England
Sponsored by: N.O.H.S.
Noon-Optional lunch with speaker - Box
luncheon \$3.00. Reservations and infor-
mation Charlotte Ross - 242-8729
1:00 PM Lecture - \$1.50 - No charge to
members. Pacific Science Center
Eames Theater (lunch & lecture)
- May 20,
21 & 22 Regular Rhododendron Show
Sponsored by Seattle Chapter, Rhododendron
Society
20th - 2-9 PM., 21 - 10 AM-9 PM., 22 - 10 AM
5 PM. Bellevue Square
- May 21 Rhododendron Show
& 22 Sponsored by: Tacoma Rhododendron Society
21st - 1-5 PM., 22nd - 10 AM-5 PM.
Point Defiance Garden, Tacoma, Washington
- May 21 Iris Show
& 22 Sponsored by: Seattle Iris Society
South Center Mall - Time to be announced.
- June 9 "Roses for Today's Garden"
Monthly Program Meeting
11:30 AM View displays, coffee available -
Noon Program. Pacific Science Center,
Eames Theater.
- June 11 Rose Show
Sponsored by: Olympic Rose Society
Community St. & Fourth St., Olympia, Wash.
Time to be announced
- June 15 Annual Fern Sale - Sponsored by: N.O.H.S.
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM. Bellevue Square, Bellevue

JAYNES, R.A. 1968. Interspecific crosses in *Kalmia*. Am. J. Botany 55: 1120-1125.

JAYNES, R.A. 1971. Seed germination of six *Kalmia* species. J. Am. Soc. Hort. Sci. 96:668-672.

JAYNES, R.A. 1974. Inheritance of flower and foliage characteristics in mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia* L.) J. Amer. Soc. Hort. Sci. 99:209-211.

HEICHEL, G.H. AND R.A. JAYNES, 1974. Stimulating emergence and growth of *Kalmia* genotypes with CO₂. Hort-Science 9:60-62.

Illustrations: Reprinted from The Laurel Book by Richard A. Jaynes (Copyright © 1975 by Hafner Press, a Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.), by permission of Hafner Press and Author.



BOOK REVIEW

The Laurel Book. Richard A. Jaynes

Hafner Press, New York 1975. 180 pages, 20 color photographs, 69 black and white illustrations. \$10.95.

Kalmias, particularly *Kalmia latifolia*, seem to have everything going for them. Their glossy evergreen leaves make them attractive at any season; buds and flowers are showy and unusual. Yet they are rarely found in nurseries and are usually overlooked by plant breeders.

The Laurel Book, by Richard A. Jaynes, will undoubtedly create great enthusiasm for this neglected genus. It is a detailed manual for growing, propagating and breeding kalmias. Though much of the information will be useful to the professional, the book is written for amateur gardeners. The style is clear and not too technical. The twenty color plates offer proof of how beautiful a *Kalmia* can be.

Dr. Jaynes discusses the seven species of *Kalmia* as they occur in the wild, then describes unusual forms which have been discovered. Propagating from seed and by vegetative methods is covered in detail, including the use of CO₂ and growth regulators. Caring for kalmias in the garden and the insects and diseases which may cause problems are thoroughly explored and there's a short examination of the toxicity of the foliage. The last third of the book is devoted to the principle and techniques of breeding kalmias.

Hopefully, *The Laurel Book* will both stimulate a demand for kalmias and help nurserymen successfully propagate new varieties in large quantities. The Pacific Northwest is so favorable for the culture of these valuable ornamentals that there's no excuse for their scarcity.

Ginny McElwain



Dryas drummondii

Illustration: Sally Dickman



Dryas octopetala

Illustration: Sally Dickman

DRYAS

Margaret Mulligan, Kirkland, Washington

Dryas, or mountain avens, are attractive plants for our gardens. In nature they are found in the high mountains and cold regions of the northern hemisphere and are circumpolar from North America to Europe. They grow in meadows over rocks, often in limestone, also on rocky slopes and screes.

Dryas octopetala, which is the best known of the genus, forms evergreen mats of alternate leaves about one inch long with rounded shallow teeth, deep green above, white and hairy below, on half inch stalks. The plant is covered with wide open one and a half inch white flowers in June. Each flower is solitary on an upright stem two to four inches high, has eight to ten petals and numerous yellow stamens. The fruits are single seeded achenes with one inch long feathery styles that form a fluffy head, almost as spectacular as the flowers. *D. octopetala*, with its rooting branches, can form a matlike plant to ten feet across.

In the garden it prefers a scree-like rocky area, in a sunny spot with good drainage. However, the plant will not survive severe drought. It can be propagated by cuttings in August or September, but the best way is by division of the rooted branches. Seed can also be sown, but great care should be used in transplanting so as not to damage the slender roots. Seedlings should flower in two to three years. Most of the plants of *Dryas octopetala* in our gardens are from European stock as our own native form is difficult to establish.

Dryas drummondii is very similar to *D. octopetala* in habit and foliage, but the leaves are more wedge-shaped at the base and are on longer stalks. The yellow flowers, appearing in June, are smaller, nodding, bell-shaped, on stalks up to six inches high. The fruiting heads are yellowish brown feathery balls about one and a half inch high. *D. drummondii* grows above timberline on rocky ridges or gravelly soil along river banks. It should be planted in a scree bed in a sunny spot and propagated in the same way as *D. octopetala*.

Dryas suendermannii is a hybrid of *D. octopetala* and *D. drummondii*. It has slightly nodding flowers, yellowish turning white when open in June.

MYRICA CALIFORNICA

Sallie D. Allen, Seattle, Washington

As Northwest gardeners become increasingly interested in knowing and growing our native plant material, they find themselves frustrated in attempting to locate nursery sources and practical "how to" growing information. I found myself in this situation many years ago during a family camping-exploring-fishing vacation along the Oregon Coast when I first "discovered"

Myrica californica commonly known as wax myrtle or pepper bush. Why shouldn't this highly decorative, native evergreen shrub (or possibly classified as a small tree) be obtainable through the usual sources or even very specialized nurseries? Is it difficult to grow? Is it impossible to propagate? Or is it just an unknown quantity, unknown and untried horticulturally?

In my garden *Myrica californica* is a large handsome shrub, six feet in height and as wide. It is much branched, the glossy aromatic, shallowly toothed leaves are about two and one half inches in length and densely arranged. The rather inconspicuous flowers can be missed entirely but the freely borne blackish nutlets, resembling peppercorns in size and shape, are extremely attractive and remain indefinitely on the plant. At Christmas whole branches with the persistent seed can be utilized effectively in holiday arrangements.

Lower branches can be pruned as the shrub matures, revealing an artistic heavy trunk, or if you so desire, multiple trunks are equally attractive. *Myrica californica* can be used in the garden as a specimen plant or as a background for azaleas or other flowering shrubs. If you are fortunate enough to have more than one, it would be excellent as dense informal hedging material.

Myrica californica, in nature, never strays far from the Pacific Coast, ranging from about Iron Springs in Washington to the Santa Monica Mountains near Los Angeles. I first became aware of this delightful shrub in Honeyman Park on the Oregon Coast where it grows in the company of *Rhododendron macrophyllum*, *Vaccinium ovatum*, *Gaultheria shallon*, *Arctostaphylos patula* and *Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia*. It is truly a lovely landscape combination that could be successfully duplicated in the home garden. In some areas *Ledum glandulosum* var. *columbianum* is added to this natural landscape, and south of Bandon, Oregon, the deliciously fragrant *R. occidentale* may also be found.

In many attempts over the years, I have only been able to root one cutting, but I keep trying! Seedlings are seldom found in the wild and I have had no success with germination of seed...not unusual though as I have consistently bad luck with seed. Mareen Kruckeberg, who is one of the finest propagators in our area, confirms that *Myrica californica* is difficult from seed or cuttings. This may well be the reason why it is seldom seen in gardens in the Northwest. Mareen did say, however, that in November, she tried again to take cuttings. At this time (February) 10 out of the 15 taken are well rooted, look much healthier, and more robust than the three lone survivors, rooted in 1975.

The only time I have ever seen *Myrica californica* seedlings was when camping on the Oregon coast. For those not familiar with the campgrounds there, asphalt roadways wind through the native shrubbery; between the asphalt and the vegetation is 18 - 24 in. of heavy gravel. It was in this gravel that I saw a very few tiny seedlings. Taking this lesson from nature, this year I have distributed a great deal of seeds along the edge of our gravel driveway, letting nature take its course and keeping the good thought in mind that it will produce some results.

Once you have located a plant, no matter how small, cultivation is no problem; any garden soil in sun or part shade suits it well. Although I do not grow it under boggy conditions, the soil in my garden is never allowed to dry out despite the excellent drainage. Judging from its native coastal habitat, one would assume that a hot dry location would not be to its liking.



Synthyris reniformis

Illustration: Dorothy Bird

SYNTHYRIS RENIFORMIS

Marvin Black

Marvin Black has been city arborist for the City of Seattle for six years, directing and coordinating the city street tree and street landscaping programs.

We called them Dolly-flowers when I was a little boy; I've not heard the name since then; perhaps we made it up. Helen Gilkey, in her Handbook of Northwestern Plants, uses the name Spring queen, but the name hasn't caught hold, and properly so. For *Synthyris reniformis* is quite unqueenly, blooming with tiny flower racemes rarely over three inches high (Gray, in his 1878 Flora of North America says "a span or so high") back in damp woods in January or February. Leslie L. Haskin (Wild Flowers of the Pacific Coast, 1934) explains that Grouse-flower would be an appropriate name, because the retiring plant blooms at the time the blue grouse are heard in the same woodland. No one used his name either - aha! he does say they are also called Dolly-flowers, and also mowich, an Indian word for deer.

I guess the Dolly-flowers suggested the diminutive size of the plant, and now I see why I remember it from 40 years ago. Ira Gabrielson says it: "A race of appealing little scrophulariids which are the earliest woodlanders to bloom in the spring. Consequently, they are getting better known to children than some of the more conspicuous summer bloomers." That's why I remember: who gets the wet feet from tramping the woods in earliest spring, little kids or mothers and fathers?

Synthyris reniformis should have been difficult to grow, one of George Schenk's plants he designates as "death-wish" ones in his classic defense of common arabis. But no, it is easy and accommodating in gardens, though its preferences are for good leaf-mulch, reasonable drainage and part or full shade. Were it difficult to grow, however, it would get more respect. It's in bloom in my garden now (January) in pale lavender forms and near white. In a severe winter it might wait to February to start, though it has been known to be in bloom by Thanksgiving. But the plants will still be blooming in April, and perhaps even May. The rosette of more-or-less evergreen leaves have a general similarity in size and shape to the *Cyclamen coum* growing nearby, though in aspect they are less perky and erect, being semi-decumbent. Most are evenly-green, scalloped on the edges, slightly hairy above--a few have mottled color. The leaves are highly attractive during the summer, like some pleasant small heuchera or saxifrage or even a well-behaved violet. The flowers have been described as like tiny blue lilies-of-the-valley, but they are a bit more modest. The spikes do keep coming, rather endlessly in a good established clump, to where there may be 20 or 25 on a plant, and then they are quite an accent. The individual flowers are bell-like, and

can be sky blue as well as lavender. I've seen pale-but-pure pink and rose forms that have been collected, as well as pure white. The plant looks best in little colonies in a small garden space with a path next to the plants. Seed grow easily, and the plant makes slowly increasing crown offsets that can divide like heucheras, in May or early autumn. Primrose lovers and little kids love it. It's native in light to medium deep woods from Chehalis south into western Oregon, if you're an early woods-walker'.

TIDBITS

by

Ladybug



The appealing little Ladybug is universally beloved and known as the most diligent of gardeners' helpers. Tidbits by Ladybug is thus introduced as a column of helpful information submitted by members wanting to share their experience, discoveries, provocative thoughts, and successful "how to" methods for better gardening for us all.

Save your egg shells for lime loving plants: To avoid the untidy appearance of egg shells in the garden simply save them and grind them before putting them out. We toss our into a small plastic tub next to other recycled items. They air dry quickly without odor, becoming very brittle. They are easily crushed right in the tub, using a glass jar for a pestle. One fourth to one eighth inch chips soon disappear in the garden, turned green by algae or dissolved by rain.

Jean Witt



Slugs are always with us! But they aren't too difficult to control if you keep fighting. They feed continuously throughout the year except in freezing or "boiling" weather; of course, during the latter, we're doing them the favor of watering our gardens.

Open both ends of a small juice can, put a pile of bait in the middle of the horizontal can and place under or near slug-ridden plants. Spray the can first with a subdued color if it is too eye-catching. The cans are easily rebaited. If you wage an all-out war in early fall, you will really notice the difference the next spring!

The only other enemies of slugs I know of are snakes, which eat too slowly to control the multitudes, a few aquatic birds, which I doubt are desirable for our gardens, and bantam chickens. These, the best of all ground-living bug eaters, find and devour the translucent, pearl-like eggs, laid just below the soil's surface. Most neighborhoods, however, prefer being wakened by motorcycle motors and trucks' backfiring than by the small clarion of the "banty" rooster!



Marge Baird

Successful cultivation and flowering of *Shortia galacifolia*, *S. uniflora* and its varieties: Older plants of these garden treasures seem to lose their vitality and flower less as the years go by. This is because with age they become woody. Try dividing plants about every three years. Transplant in fresh soil mixture composed of forest duff, sand, bone meal and Soildusto, well mixed. Firm and water in.



Sibyl Parker

Cut Worms not little slugs are slaughtering the *Iris reticulata* species this time of year. Insect dust such as Diazinon will solve this problem.

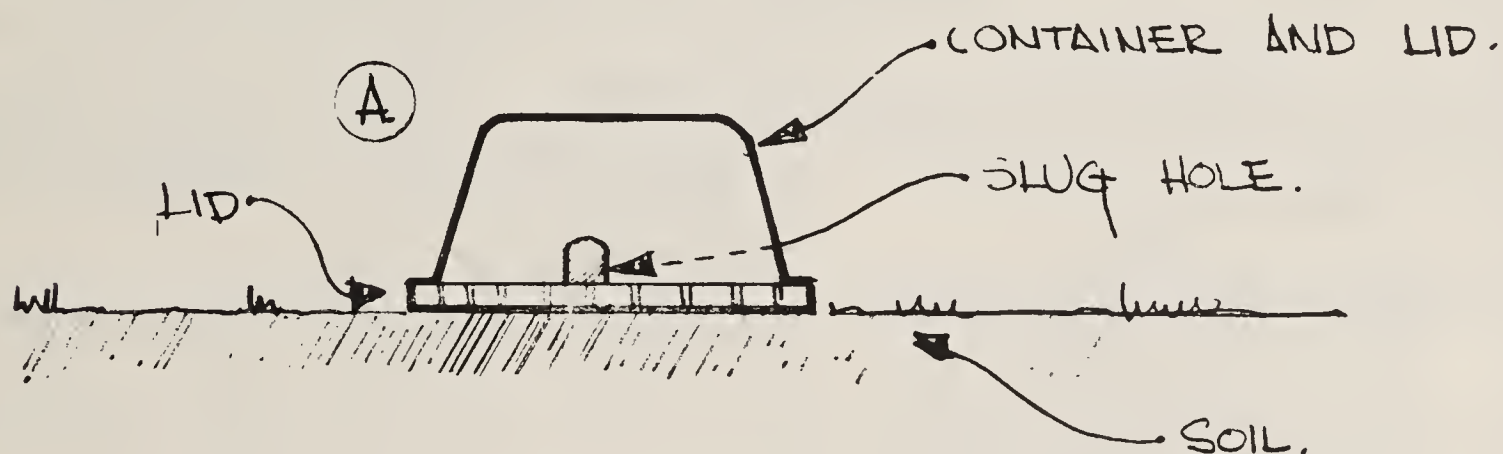


Jean Witt

SLUG TRAP

Use any plastic container. Cut 2-3 slug holes in top edge. Place slug bait on lid and seal the bottom of the container to the lid. You now have a waterproof "SLUG TRAP" to use during the warm rainy months. (See drawing.)

① PLASTIC CARTON ARE BEST:



Allen Dale Terrill

Are you having trouble with mice eating your species Crocus? When planting, line the hole with mosquito netting. The roots will go down through the netting, but the mice will not come up.



Sibyl Parker

When the big leaf maples, (*Acer macrophyllum*), are in full bloom in your immediate vicinity, it is time to set out bedding and vegetable plants.

Betty Madison

Oh, joy! It's raining!

Ladybug



GARDENER'S EXCHANGE



Are you looking for special plants, cuttings, seed books or specific "how to" gardening information?

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WANTED: Plants, *Rhododendron lapponicum*, white form - *Phyllodoce empetri-formis*, *Trillium hibbersonii*. Sallie D. Allen, 18540 - 26th Ave. N.E.,
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